

## **Planning a Worship Service**

We finished up last time going through the chapel policy at Covenant Seminary related to women in worship. We wanted to address the larger context of who participates in what way in the worship services. I just want to make a couple more comments related to that. The role of women in the church is an ongoing struggle and discussion. There are strong feelings on both sides of the spectrum. When I say spectrum, it is within a spectrum that says no women elders or pastors. It is not a debate over whether or not women should hold the office of elder. I do not know of anybody in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) who is still in the PCA and is in any way advocating that women should be elders. There is agreement on the application of 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Within this spectrum, there is a range of views of what women can do in worship services and even outside of worship services. Some would argue that, as it relates to worship, women should only be able to be part of the congregational voice. They would say a woman should never be in front as a solo voice through prayer, Scripture reading, testimony, a mission moment, or even a musical solo. Some people make a mistake there. You can speculate as to why. I am not exactly sure; I think it is an inconsistency in their position that really wants someone with a beautiful musical voice to be able to sing. That is the congregational voice view of women's involvement in worship.

On the other side is the solo voice view of women's involvement in worship. We have discussed some already about the matter of teaching. Some would say that women should not teach adult men. Others would say that women can teach men for a limited time and under the oversight of the session. There are three overarching views related to a biblical understanding of women. One is complementarian, another is hierarchical, and the last is egalitarian. The hierarchical view is very hierarchical in terms of its view of authority. Men have authority over women in every time and place to its extreme. The egalitarian view says there is no distinction between men and women in terms of gifts and being able to hold office. There are distinctions biologically. The complementarian view is somewhere in the middle. There are some in both the hierarchical and egalitarian views who would have a particular view of headship. There is a range in all of these. In different issues, people are not always consistent with them.

One time I was at a meeting of PCA teaching and ruling elders. I was fairly new to Covenant Seminary at the time. There was a book table, and Dr. Chapell had just written a book called *Each For the Other*. It is about marriage. In it he clearly articulates a complementary view. It says there is headship, leadership, and role assignment based on gender, namely husband in the family and elder in the church. It is complimentary, people equally made in the image of God and redeemed. He was articulating the classical headship complimentary view. A friend of mine saw me, and he approached me to talk. He said, "I did not realize that Dr. Chapell had adopted the egalitarian view of men and women." I asked if he had read the book and he said that he had. I said, "If that is an egalitarian view of men and women, then my friend I believe you have become a hierarchicalist." This was another bad word; I was saying this in a derogatory way. This issue is a matter of office versus gifts and function. We have said that the function of preaching is closely tied to the office of authority and that there are some functions in the life of the church that have to do with authoritative teaching. There is a close link there; it is not a complete separation. I believe the freedom to exercise gifts under the oversight of those who are set apart and ordained as qualified male elders is the biblical view. It is where Covenant Seminary is; it is where I am. I think it is healthy application of biblical teaching as it relates to the church.

Let us talk about what job a woman can have on a church staff. This is another issue that comes up. Most people say a woman can be a director of children's ministries. This is because the men in the children's ministries are usually under 12. They are not yet adult men. They can do women's ministry.

They can do mercy ministry if the church has a staff position for that. None of these have the teaching authority, particularly of women teaching men. Of course there is a teaching function to a lot of things, but it is not usurping the office of elder. Other positions could include youth director, working especially with women in middle and high school ministries. Campus ministry begins to get into the adult male aspect that some would have a problem with. So far this spectrum within complementarianism within the PCA would say these staff positions are all right. Most would also say a woman could have a staff position in the music ministry. I am a part of a group that represents about 150-200 churches, and of those about half of them have a full- or part-time music director on staff. About a third of those are women. Some who have male music directors also have them do some things that only elders typically do in other churches. Some churches are comfortable having a non-elder man lead many parts of worship, including the music. They are not necessarily comfortable having a woman lead in the same way because it is a gender thing and not an office thing. This is one of the areas where we need to give room to each other and help each other grow.

At Covenant Seminary there are some men who come to seminary here who wonder why there are women in seminary at all. Then you explain that some are in the Masters of counseling arts and theological students and arts and educational ministries. They can see women's roles for that. But then they ask why in the world you would have any women in the Masters of divinity program. They are not seeking ordination, and if you are women, by definition, you are in the non-ordination track of the Masters of divinity. My response is, "Let us suppose you have a woman who, for 25 years, has been actively involved in Tenth Presbyterian Church under the ministry of James Montgomery Boyce. She has been hearing him preach every morning and evening, going to Sunday school class, and is involved in the women's ministry. Over that 25-year period she is learning a lot about Scripture, theology, ministry, life in the church, and practical theology. Would that be a good thing to have such a woman in your church?" Sure, the Bible calls for women to grow into maturity in their knowledge of Christ. It does not say, "Men, grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ." It says "people of God" grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. That woman with knowledge and depth in her walk would be an asset to a pastor, a session, and the ministry staff of the church. She should be used appropriately under the oversight of the session.

What if a 25-year-old woman in that same church decides she wants to come to Covenant Seminary and get a Masters of divinity degree? She wants to study the Scripture in the original languages, get the exegetically based theology, and be in the systematic theology classes. She wants to be in a place where they learn how to appropriately, under ordained men, function in a co-laboring kind of way. Paul did this with Priscilla, the wife of Aquilla, and the two women in Philippians 4 who are mentioned whom he called "co-laborers in the Gospel." In three to four years at Covenant Seminary in the Masters of divinity program or the Masters of theological studies, you can go on a fast track of what you might get over 15-20 years in a church that is faithfully expositing, teaching, and training for ministry in the life of the church. As a pastor in two PCA churches, I would love to have some Covenant Seminary graduates of any degree program in my congregation. My Greek and Hebrew skills were never very well trained, since I went to a liberal mainline seminary and did not ever pick it up and learn it like some of you in this room would be able to do on the spot. So I would love to have a Masters of divinity graduate from Covenant Seminary who could answer some of my exegetical questions about original languages from the Scripture. I would draw upon her, or a non-ordained man, who has training to help in that. That does not usurp my office of elder because a woman might give me some insight into Scripture. It makes me a better preacher and teacher of the Word. That is the body of Christ functioning according to gift, training, and experience.

At Covenant Seminary and in the denomination right now the large majority of people are somewhere in

the center of the complementarian view. We get along pretty well and function pretty well recognizing that. There are some people, including some students, who sometimes come to Covenant Seminary who are over on this side. They are raising questions about why women are here. They ask why we would have the wife of a Masters of divinity student who was a full-time music and arts director at a PCA church for eight years be involved in helping me to plan worship, play the piano, and lead music and worship at most chapels. They would wonder about that. Surely there are some Masters of divinity men who have such gifts. Maybe there are, but most of them are not necessarily ready to come forward, give the amount of time, and have that amount of expertise. There are some who could, but at this point I have chosen Claudia for that.

There are some others in the PCA and both men and women at Covenant Seminary who wonder why the PCA is so stifling to women if you hold such views. It seems like you are living in fear of these people attacking you. Why cannot Covenant Seminary be more proactive in leading the charges of affirming and calling forth the giftedness and involvement of women into the ministry life of the church? They are not talking about the office of elder or having teaching authority. They are talking about being under the oversight of the authority. In my seven years here we have had these discussions every year. Every year the women's student fellowship group asks Dr. Chapell, Dr. Guthrie, and me to come and talk through some of these things with them. There is a wide range of views on some of these things within this, even among some of our women students here. This is an issue we are going to live with. It is an issue that our culture is very confused about. It is an issue on which I cut some of my theological teeth and left a denomination over. Because I was unwilling to ordain women, I was found unfit for ministry in the mainline Presbyterian Church. So I ended up in the PCA partly because of this issue. I was seen as an extreme conservative in the mainline Presbyterian Church, but I tend to more on the liberal side within the PCA. I never changed my views; I just changed denominations. That happens sometimes. I personally think it is an important issue to the rising generation of people who are coming to seminary now. They do not have a lot of the same baggage and categories of previous generations. They do not have extreme, fundamentalist, hierarchical views of men and women. I hope we will actually see some repentance on the part of leadership in the PCA for stifling women in ways that we should not have been because of our fear of those who might think poorly of us if we did. I would like to see the church break free from some of this baggage. We should provide the kind of oversight and freedom that I was talking about in terms of how I as a husband should relate to my wife and children. Elders should affirm all the rest of the people in the church who are not elders: old, young, educated, uneducated, male, and female.

We had an elder's wife in one of the churches that I served who was gifted musically. She wrote music, played the guitar, and sang. A lot of the music she wrote was written during an extremely challenging time in her Christian life. It had a lot of crying out to God and a deep trust in Him through difficult times. I wanted her to sing more than she did. She probably only sang a couple times a year because she did not want to be up in front of people doing that. It was a clear gift that the congregation was very edified by. She also happens to be one of these people who, when she prays, it goes right to the heart. A couple times a year this woman would reluctantly sing a solo with her guitar, after I urged her. I would also ask her if she would pray either before or after she sang. I did this for two reasons. One, I think that is a helpful thing to do when people perform a solo. It reminds people that it is not performance time, but it is being offered up to God. More so, I wanted the congregation to be blessed by her praying. For me, I loved the music, but I loved her praying even more.

Another illustration is that when we would open up the congregation to pray prayers of thanksgiving, I always knew that one of the women in the church was going to pray. She was going to pray for about 60 seconds. She would pray in a rapid-fire way that probably drew on about 20 passages of Scripture, allusion, references, and paraphrases in the course of her praying. It was an amazing praying of

Scripture out loud in praise to God. I cannot do that, and I know very few people who can. It is the root of a woman who does not come from a Presbyterian background and did not embrace Reformed theology, even after sitting under my preaching for seven years! She was immersed in the Scripture and in a life of prayer. It came out of her when she prayed. It was like the Scripture taking root and coming out when she prayed. It is like the passage that says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." In her case it was the Word of Christ dwelling in her richly as she prayed. There are ways to incorporate people who are not elders in the church into the blessing of the congregation under 1 Corinthians 14:26. Some people are fearful of what happens if you open that door. So they take 1 Corinthians 14:26 and say that it was given in a time when there were still tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophesy. Now that we have the rest of the Bible, we do not want to invite people to come and say things like that. That would be one approach to the dismissal of it. The verse says, "What then shall we say brothers? When you come together everyone has a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation." The other one that you sometimes see is that they say Paul is chiding them. He is saying they should not be doing that. That is what they are doing, and he is trying to correct it and put a stop to it. But if you keep reading it says, "All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church." He is giving regulations on how to do it. He is not forbidding the doing of it. I had some people press back on that with me in some discussions recently. I happened by the faculty offices and I saw a book by D. A. Carson, an excellent exegete, on this particular passage. I looked and read the five or six verses and was comforted to learn I agreed with him.

Let us move on and talk about planning a worship service. In review, there is a fivefold approach to the regulative principle. We need to evaluate what we do in the service by looking at these things. Have we included the commanded elements? Are our prayers, songs, and other aspects filled with biblical content? Are we arranging this in a way that goes somewhere between the call to worship and the benediction, or is it just one thing after another going through a series of elements? Are they progressing somewhere and taking the congregants somewhere in worship with an openness to various expressions and dynamics that are unique to a local church? In the 1990s Dr. Chapell was asked to give a pre-General Assembly workshop on worship along with Skip Ryan and John Frame. It was called "Gospel Worship Seminar." It is something that Dr. Chapell developed and has given on different occasions. We had him give it at the worship conference we had here a couple years ago. It was a way of addressing Gospel-centered worship to people who came from churches with a range of worship styles. It is an attempt to say how we can do Gospel-centered worship in ways that may fit many different styles. Part of what Dr. Chapell shows early on is how much overlap there is between the pre-1570 Roman Mass, Luther's worship service, Calvin in around 1542, the Westminster Assembly Directory of Worship, and Dr. Robert Rayburn, who used to teach the worship class here. You used to see the general structure is liturgy of the Word and liturgy of the upper room. It is Word and sacrament. There is an entrance into worship, some reading of psalms and other Scripture readings, a confession of sin and assurance of forgiveness, a sermon, moving into the Lord's Supper time, and a sending out. You see a Gospel progression that is there in recognizable ways across a pretty wide range of denominational and historical time periods and practices. I think this is helpful to see. I am not going to go through the whole thing, but you can listen to Dr. Chapell go through the whole thing on Covenant's website, if you would like. He talks about consistent elements reflected in biblical worship patterns. He does a little bit there like I did when we went through Exodus 24, Isaiah 6, Acts 2, and Revelation 4 and 5. The Old Testament is Gospel anticipation; the New Testament is Gospel fulfillment. He also says,

Gospel perspective will not allow us to segregate concerns about God's glory and His people's good. Thus it grants much aid regarding values that sometimes seem to be in tension. When our question is, "How can we balance all of these?" then we should not neglect to consider whether what we are doing is consistent with our understanding of how we should present the Gospel in

this context. We are always required to consider how we may represent the Gospel so as to bring the most glory to God and good to His people. This will require, as the Gospel always does, that we abandon no essential that declares the glory of God and ignore no means that rightly minister to the necessities and capacities of the people.

He is trying to say that the glory of God and the edification of the church in corporate public worship are not at odds. We edify God's people when we glorify Him. We glorify God when we edify His people. We are to keep both audiences in view as the worship planners, leaders, and preachers. The glory of God and the edification of His people are never at odds with each other. To be concerned about the edification of the church by the means of grace that God converges together in corporate public worship is not to be man-centered. It is a God-centered way of edifying the people God has gathered whom He wants to edify. We are accomplishing His purposes. We are glorifying Him by doing and utilizing the very means that He has given to His church for His people to grow to be more like Christ, which glorifies God. To be in the presence of God, desiring to give Him glory, is part of how we are shaped, changed, and built up in the faith. Our focus is to be lifted beyond ourselves to Him.

Dr. Chapell talks about God's glory and the congregants' edification coexisting as a reaction to seeker-driven worship. This is where the whole focus of what we do in worship is to engage and hold the attention of people who are not believers whom we are encouraging to come to our worship services. It is seeing corporate public worship primarily as evangelistic. The reaction would be consistent somewhat with Zwingli's practice that the purpose of worship is to give knowledge to God's people so that they can gain greater insight and understanding of the Scripture. It is not wrong to hope that unbelievers will come to Christ in a worship service. It is not wrong, either, to hope that the people of God will be built up in their knowledge and understanding of the Scripture. But sometimes it turns into an outreach service or a teaching time in a way that people have reacted to it by going in the opposite direction. They have said that worship services need to be God-centered and all about the glory of God. Once you start having a concern about the people who are present in worship, then you become man-centered in your worship and not God-centered. Dr. Chapell is saying that the glory of God and the edification of His people is a false dichotomy. Even the evangelization of unbelievers can be rightly included in a worship service.

I do not think that evangelizing unbelievers should be the focus of a worship service, but how can you ever not be thinking about the unbelievers? In 1 Corinthians 11-14 they are envisioned being there; people who are not believers will fall down and say, "God is in your midst." They will say this because of how you love God and how you love others as the Bible talks about in John 15-17. So edification of the body and glorification of God are complimentary rather than opposed to each other. I am in support of God-centered edification of His people whom He has called together into His presence to worship in a way that brings glory to God. We are doing what He has called us to do. How do you plan a worship service without thinking about the impact it is going to have on the people who gather? Doing it according to God's instruction is what brings glory to Him. It is not that you never think about the people. Otherwise it would be like saying, "Let us have the most theologically deep, musically complex three hymns that we will sing this week that no one has ever heard before. It will prove how God-centered we are in worship. We do not care if the people do not know it. They serve the purpose of meaty, God-focused hymns in this situation." Does that glorify God? The intention may be to glorify God, but it almost ends up being a competition to be more God-centered than the next guy. That belies being man-centered in the very statement. It is more about me being more God-centered than it is about God being honored in it.

Continuing through Dr. Chapell's seminar, let us go through some practical instruction in leading worship. These are some of the intangibles like sitting or standing too long, too much or too little singing, too much up and down, praying too long or too much, too formal or informal, too familiar or unfamiliar, and too archaic or modern. You can use archaic, reverential, or conversational language in prayer. Dr. Chapell says, "Worship has an obligation to lead into the transcendent, not separate the worshiper from it." You should take people from where they are and try to lead them into the transcendent presence of God. You should not use archaic, flowery language that people do not understand because you are committed to the transcendence of God in worship. It goes right back to putting the edification of the people and the glorification of God at odds with each other. It does not work very well.

Now let us talk about the basic structure of worship services. Some things we already addressed earlier in the course. A worship service generally consists of God taking hold of us in the call to worship; separating His people from sin in confession, forgiveness, and speaking into His people; Scripture reading and sermon consecration; giving tangible signs and seals; the Lord's Supper; and arranging for succession. It is the covenant renewal pattern: call, confession, consecration, communion, and commission. The worship elements are building blocks that we have been talking about. There are a few things to keep in mind as we choose and arrange the elements and expressions of worship. Are we representing the Gospel in the way we arrange the elements and choose the content? Are we shaping the Gospel storyline that flows from Scripture into the lives of the congregation? How does the presence of Christ impact our choices? Is worship dialogical? Does it receive from God and give back to God? And we need to ask ourselves why we are planning to do such and such at this point in the service. These are some questions to keep in mind as you plan a service. When I was preaching regularly I had a list of things, probably from the homiletics class I had from Dr. Chapell, that I used to check over my sermon. Before I went to preach a sermon, I would take it through a grid of some questions. Have I really shown what the need of the sinner is that this passage meets? How have I portrayed Christ in this? There were some key questions I asked, and this is a helpful habit to get into with your sermons.

We are going to talk about worship and music in the next two sessions. There are great old hymns with great old tunes, great old hymns with great new tunes, and great new hymns with great new tunes. There are also great contemporary choruses that can bridge between other songs and/or elements. And there are great historic choruses that can act as bridges between other songs and/or elements. What I am trying to say is that the repertoire that we can draw from is huge musically. It can help serve these various purposes in worship. To limit yourself to just one of those categories actually may limit the potential impact that you could have. You obviously have to assess your worshiping congregation. You need to think about who has gathered and what hymns they know or do not know. You want to make worship accessible. You should be concerned about the edification of people as well as the glory of God and the Gospel storyline of the service. Ask yourself what you could use in place of a less-known hymn for something that might be better known. Introducing new hymnody into the church is a great thing. But you should not do too much all at once. That is loving and shepherding the people well. You do not want to frustrate them by preventing them from being able to sing any songs because they do not know them. You do not want to have too much of that.

I want to go through an example of a worship service that I planned a few years ago with a pastor in Indiana. The context was a group of ruling and teaching elders in the Ohio Valley Presbytery. It was about 50-60 people with another 30-40 people from the local church where the presbytery was being hosted. There were about 100 people, mostly men, representing the churches of the Ohio Valley Presbytery. The pastor, who was my successor at this church, Tom Stein, Jr., was preaching a sermon from Titus 2:6-8. The passage says, "Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In

everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.” He was addressing how a pastor, Titus, should relate to the young men of his congregation. What God had put on Tom’s heart, given that the pastors and the elders of the presbytery were coming together, was to preach a contextually relevant sermon. The men in the congregation were in leadership, working with younger men in the church, training them, discipling them, and bringing them along. That is one of the dynamics in the service. Another dynamic is that we have the Lord’s Supper together when we have a presbytery worship service. It is served by the elders and under the oversight of the session of the local church. We also thought it would be good to have a season of time when we would pray for one another in the presbytery. As Tom and I talked and worked through this, we thought about different ways to structure things. Musically you have a congregation that has a choir with an accompanist on the piano who would be sufficient just by herself. There were also potential instrumentalists from the ensemble of instruments. There was a wide range of songs that could be sung in terms of musical ability. This would not necessarily be true in every church we would go to within the presbytery. We could pretty much sing a range of what we would want to. Again, you have to think about what churches are in the presbytery. Some of the churches do not know that there is such a thing as Indelible Grace, a group that has set old hymns to new tunes. We will talk more about that later. Some of them have never heard a song like *How Deep the Father’s Love*. They might be resistant to certain instruments that could be used. You have the range of styles represented in the presbytery. That is a tough service to plan for, to draw in and edify without offending. There is no more analytical and potentially critical group of a worship service than getting a bunch of elders in the room together. You get the most response to General Assembly worship services.

The headings for this service were “The Celebration of Christ Our Worship Leader,” “The Celebration of the Word Read and Preached,” “The Celebration of the Lord’s Supper,” and “The Celebration of Our Life Together in Christ.” Because we wanted to have a time of praying for one another and responding to the preached Word and the Lord’s Supper, we decided early on that we wanted to have quite a bit of time after the sermon and the Lord’s Supper. There would be singing together, praying together, and fellowshiping together as the brothers of the presbytery. This comes out of having heard the Word preached and flows out of the table of communion with our Lord. For that reason we moved the sermon much earlier than it usually is. Tom was up preaching about 10 minutes into the service, which is quite unusual. We would not necessarily use the questions of the Shorter Catechism in just any worship service.

Let us suppose about 90% of a church does not know what the Westminster Confession is. It is a new church plant that is founded on a Reformed confessional foundation, but you have not yet introduced much or used question and answer from the Shorter Catechism in the worship service. In that type of church we would probably not use the Shorter Catechism. But in this service we were doing a few things differently with some newer musical expressions and an arrangement that places the sermon very early in the service. We thought to frame a lot of these things in a presbytery worship service with the question and answer from the Shorter Catechism. It is not only good in its own right, but it might help alleviate some concern over whether or not what we were doing in the service was all right. We moved the service together with a modern version of the Shorter Catechism. We organized the time of confession leading into the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. We used Ephesians 2:1-10 as an opportunity to confess our sin and be assured of what God in His grace has done.

Here is an example of using a passage of Scripture as a call to confession with silent confession in between and assurance of forgiveness with the rest of the same passage in Ephesians 2. The prayer of thanksgiving was adapted from Calvin’s 1545 Strasbourg service. It is a great prayer leading into the

Lord's Supper. Sometimes you pray your own prayer, sometimes you can use some great ones that have been done in the history of the church. We sang "Come Christians Join to Sing," "What Wondrous Love," and "O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus" as some traditional hymns. Then we sang "Wonderful, Merciful Savior" as a newer song. Mindy, the music director, also wrote a choir piece from an old Charles Wesley hymn out of a little book called *Gatsby's Hymns*. There are about 700 hymn words in this little paperback book. A lot of the Indelible Grace hymns are from musicians searching through hymnbooks, devotionally reading through hymns of the past, and being impacted by them. Then they write music and put a hymn to it. So that is one of the things that the music director there had begun to do and turned it into a choral piece. We had an open time of prayer, celebrating our life together. The choir sang another piece toward the end, and we went out with a great arrangement of both the choir and the congregation singing "Salvation Belongs to Our God."

We incorporated a number of things into that service while following a general format. First was the call. We moved the confession after the sermon leading into the Lord's Supper. There is liberty to do that. In the commissioning, sending out, and being consecrated in the Word you have a Gospel progression that is unique to this context. Part of the reason I use this as an example is to point out the number of things in terms of context. It is a presbytery worship service that allows us to do some things that might be a little different. We wanted to still show sensitivity to the basic format, though. We used some rich resources from the past, hymns, and the 1545 confession from Strasbourg. And there were some fresh things like a brand new choral song that had been written within a month of this service. The choir there had just done it in their own service. It was partly written with an eye toward this presbytery service. It was something very fresh that musically was written taking an old Charles Wesley hymn that we do not find in hymnals and restoring it back to the church. There was also an opportunity for open expressions. We did not have to worry too much about whether people who were not elders would be participating in this service. Almost all of them were elders. To open it up for a time of prayer and letting people express a single voice was not too controversial. I do not remember whether my friend, Virginia, who prays the Scripture prayer for 60 seconds every time was there at the evening service and prayed in the open time of prayer or not. I probably would have remembered it in that context, and it would have been fine with me.

The Worship Sourcebook makes use of Scripture and responsive reading very nicely. We have inherited the English puritan practice of not having a lot of reading of Scriptures because it was too much like the Anglican church of England. It is sort of ironic to be so Word-centered and yet be hesitant to read a lot of Scripture in a worship service. I am in favor of more reading of Scripture. I think it can be done very effectively by having more than one voice reading all of the passages. This is controversial in some circles, but at my church we have four singers up front, usually two men and two women, who sometimes read responsively among themselves. Sometimes the women's voice will be a woman's voice in Scripture, like Mary. Some people say that sounds like drama in worship. We are just reading Scripture a little more dramatically. I do not think that is a bad thing. You can do it in a way that calls too much attention to itself. There are always dangers. There are a lot of things that you can do, though. I was in a church one time where an elder and his wife led the pastoral prayer. They each prayed about six times using short prayers. He would pray for something in the church, then she would pray for another ministry in the church. He would pray for someone in the hospital, and she would pray for something else. It created a sense of church as family with the husband and wife praying for the needs of the congregation. There are endless ways of involving non-elders in worship services that can be edifying. But we do not normally explore them because we get into certain patterns and habits of doing things, so we do not think outside the box. Maybe we do think there is room outside the box. Again, just because you can do these things does not mean that you have to do these things. You should at least explore whether or not you want to do them, though. Not everybody is going to agree with the range of



application.

Let us finish with some questions to ask in planning a worship service. These are big questions to ask as you may be developing some things in a church you go to. How does the session oversee the worship of the church? Who makes up the worship planning team? Biblical elements: are they present? How are they arranged? Is there room for creative and fresh expression? Do the various expressions support each other? Do they support the overall focus of the service? Are they given appropriate time and weight in the service? Is each element Word-centered and Christ-centered? Does it serve the Gospel purpose and storyline of this specific worship service? What is the role of the sermon? What is the role of non-sermon elements? Where do the sacraments fit in? Does our worship invite participation? How do we make changes with proper instruction and patience? You do not want to just do change. Sometimes you need to instruct toward that and be patient with it. Does the music express reverent joy in content and style? Does our worship bring us into each other's presence as well as God's?